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AUTHOR	Lokerson, Jean
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ABSTRACT

This digest presents definitions of 30 important terms in the field of learning disabilities. They are: accommodations, assistive technology, attention deficit disorder, brain imaging techniques, brain injury, collaboration, developmental aphasia, direct instruction, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, dyslexia, dysnomia, dyspraxia, learned helplessness, learning modalities, learning strategy approaches, learning styles, locus of control, metacognitive learning, minimal brain dysfunction, multisensory learning, neuropsychological examination, perceptual handicap, prereferral process, resource program, self-advocacy, specific language disability, specific learning disability, subtype research, and transition. (DB)

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ERIC
Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children
THE COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN
1920 Association Drive • Reston, VA 22091-1589
(703) 264-9474 • FAX (703) 264-9494

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Learning Disabilities: Glossary of Some Important Terms

Accommodations—Techniques and materials that allow individuals with LD to complete school or work tasks with greater ease and effectiveness. Examples include spellcheckers, tape recorders, and expanded time for completing assignments.

Assistive Technology—Equipment that enhances the ability of students and employees to be more efficient and successful. For individuals with LD, computer grammar checkers, an overhead projector used by a teacher, or the audiovisual information delivered through a CD-ROM would be typical examples.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)—A severe difficulty in focusing and maintaining attention. Often leads to learning and behavior problems at home, school, and work. Also called *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder* (ADHD).

Brain Imaging Techniques—Recently developed, noninvasive techniques for studying the activity of living brains. Includes brain electrical activity mapping (BEAM), computerized axial tomography (CAT), and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Brain Injury—The physical damage to brain tissue or structure that occurs before, during, or after birth that is verified by EEG, MRI, CAT, or a similar examination, rather than by observation of performance. When caused by an accident, the damage may be called *Traumatic Brain Injury* (TBI).

Collaboration—A program model in which the LD teacher demonstrates for or team teaches with the general classroom teacher to help a student with LD be successful in a regular classroom.

Developmental Aphasia—A severe language disorder that is presumed to be due to brain injury rather than because of a developmental delay in the normal acquisition of language.

Direct Instruction—An instructional approach to academic subjects that emphasizes the use of carefully sequenced steps that include demonstration, modeling, guided practice, and independent application.

Dyscalculia—A severe difficulty in understanding and using symbols or functions needed for success in mathematics.

Dysgraphia—A severe difficulty in producing handwriting that is legible and written at an age-appropriate speed.

Dyslexia—A severe difficulty in understanding or using one or more areas of language, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and spelling.

Dysnomia—A marked difficulty in remembering names or recalling words needed for oral or written language.

Dyspraxia—A severe difficulty in performing drawing, writing, buttoning, and other tasks requiring fine motor skill, or in sequencing the necessary movements.

Learned Helplessness—A tendency to be a passive learner who depends on others for decisions and guidance. In individuals with LD, continued struggle and failure can heighten this lack of self-confidence.

Learning Modalities—Approaches to assessment or instruction stressing the auditory, visual, or tactile avenues for learning that are dependent upon the individual.

Learning Strategy Approaches—Instructional approaches that focus on efficient ways to learn, rather than on curriculum. Includes specific techniques for organizing, actively interacting with material, memorizing, and monitoring any content or subject.

Learning Styles—Approaches to assessment or instruction emphasizing the variations in temperament, attitude, and preferred manner of tackling a task. Typically considered are styles along the active/passive, reflective/impulsive, or verbal/spatial dimensions.

Locus of Control—The tendency to attribute success and difficulties either to internal factors such as effort or

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to external factors such as chance. Individuals with learning disabilities tend to blame failure on themselves and achievement on luck, leading to frustration and passivity.

Metacognitive Learning—Instructional approaches emphasizing awareness of the cognitive processes that facilitate one's own learning and its application to academic and work assignments. Typical metacognitive techniques include systematic rehearsal of steps or conscious selection among strategies for completing a task.

Minimal Brain Dysfunction (MBD)—A medical and psychological term originally used to refer to the learning difficulties that seemed to result from identified or presumed damage to the brain. Reflects a medical, rather than educational or vocational orientation.

Multisensory Learning—An instructional approach that combines auditory, visual, and tactile elements into a learning task. Tracing sandpaper numbers while saying a number fact aloud would be a multisensory learning activity.

Neuropsychological Examination—A series of tasks that allow observation of performance that is presumed to be related to the intactness of brain function.

Perceptual Handicap—Difficulty in accurately processing, organizing, and discriminating among visual, auditory, or tactile information. A person with a perceptual handicap may say that "cap/cup" sound the same or that "b" and "d" look the same. However, glasses or hearing aids do not necessarily indicate a perceptual handicap.

Prereferral Process—A procedure in which special and regular teachers develop trial strategies to help a student showing difficulty in learning remain in the regular classroom.

Resource Program—A program model in which a student with LD is in a regular classroom for most of each day, but also receives regularly scheduled individual services in a specialized LD resource classroom.

Self-Advocacy—The development of specific skills and understandings that enable children and adults to explain their specific learning disabilities to others and cope positively with the attitudes of peers, parents, teachers, and employers.

Specific Language Disability (SLD)—*A severe* difficulty in some aspect of listening, speaking, reading, writing, or spelling, while skills in the other areas are age-appropriate. Also called *Specific Language Learning Disability (SLLD)*.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)—The official term used in federal legislation to refer to difficulty in certain areas of learning, rather than in all areas of learning. Synonymous with learning disabilities.

Subtype Research—A recently developed research method that seeks to identify characteristics that are common to specific groups within the larger population of individuals identified as having learning disabilities.

Transition—Commonly used to refer to the change from secondary school to postsecondary programs, work, and independent living typical of young adults. Also used to describe other periods of major change such as from early childhood to school or from more specialized to mainstreamed settings.

Note: The content of this digest was developed by Dr. Jean Lokerson, DLD President, 1991-92; Associate Professor, LD Program, School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA.

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